

IV. *On the naming of Local Races, Subspecies, Aberrations, Seasonal Forms, etc.* By LORD ROTHSCHILD, F.R.S., etc.

[Read February 6th, 1918.]

IN the "Entomological News," vol. xxviii, pp. 463-67, Sir George Hampson has an article on "The Determination of Generic Types in the Lepidoptera." In the last paragraph he protests against what he calls the "INSIDIOUS GERMAN SPECIFIC POLYNOMIAL NOMENCLATURE," and says it is unnecessary to name *local, seasonal, sexual, polymorphic* and other forms. Nevertheless, he proceeds to say that when dealing with a species they must all be DESCRIBED. He further adds that no such thing as a "SUBSPECIES" exists in nature, and if the term is used, it is only a PROOF of IGNORANCE.

These statements only prove that Sir George Hampson has utterly failed to grasp the meaning of the term "SUBSPECIES," and also has misunderstood the main objects of Zoological Nomenclature.

I will deal with the last question first. In my opinion and that of the bulk of my zoological acquaintances "ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE" has been established to enable the students of this branch of knowledge to communicate their ideas in speech and writing in the most concise, clearest and most orderly manner.

Now we all, I think, take our starting-point from Linnæus, and he was the first to name local races, inventing for them the term VARIETAS. If this were the end of the question, I would be the first to range myself under the Linnean Banner, but subsequent writers have used the term "VARIETY," "VARIETAS," to mean indiscriminately local race, and individual aberration, and therefore I and most other zoologists have determined, backed up by the International Commission on Nomenclature, to reject the term "VARIETAS" altogether and to substitute the term ABERRATION for an individual variation or monstrosity, and SUBSPECIES for LOCAL = GEOGRAPHICAL RACE. Thus Sir George Hampson himself acknowledges, in spite of his denial quoted above, that SUBSPECIES DO exist in Nature, for he acknowledges the existence of LOCAL RACES but proves himself unable to grasp that SUBSPECIES and LOCAL RACE are one and the same thing.

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As to the point he raises that anything lower than a "SPECIES" should not be named, I consider it raises directly the fundamental question of the purpose and convenience of "Nomenclature."

Surely the following illustration should clinch the argument. Of the butterfly *Colias fieldii* there are two geographical races—one the Indo-Burmese race, which is smaller and paler and is the typical race, and a much larger and brighter Chinese race. Now surely it is much more concise and comprehensive to say *Colias fieldii chinensis* than to say "THE LARGER AND MORE BRIGHTLY-COLOURED CHINESE RACE OF *COLIAS FIELDII*."

Again, if the term *Colias hyale* ab. *nigra* is used, it is more convenient than the sentence, "THE BLACK ABERRATION OF *COLIAS HYALE*."

It is to be regretted, I agree, that some authors, such as Dr. Roger Verity, have been led into error in a different direction, and have expanded the quite legitimate and absolutely necessary trinomial nomenclature into a polynomial one. But this is entirely due to their futile attempts to arrange Zoological Nomenclature on a purely PHYLOGENETIC basis.

The result of this is, that they take the several local races of a widespread insect, and, thinking the phylogenetic relationship is evidenced by closer or less close resemblance, proclaim the local races most alike in appearance to be nearest in fact. Therefore they name them as subspecies of subspecies, and so on. The truth is, that in many cases local races at the extreme ends of the area of a species are the closest in appearance, while the most different races occur in between. It is therefore obvious that two races which are nearest in appearance may be phylogenetically the widest apart. The only course open, and the one we, *i. e.* the majority, adopt, is, that as the original ancestral form and many other intermediate links have long disappeared, to treat all local forms of one species as co-equal in value, and name them all trinomially.

The object of naming other lower categories is always the same, *viz.* to facilitate their discussion; but here again, led by several English zoologists, the naming of individual aberrations has been carried too far, and in some cases almost every second specimen has received a name. It is, however, always of importance to name seasonal, dimorphic, and sexually polymorphic forms.